Therapeutic use of ketamine for treating severe depression: Risks and potential

Banbury Center, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor, New York, USA
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Organizers:
Hakon Heimer, Cure Alliance for Mental Illness, Cold Spring Harbor, New York, USA
Rhonda Robinson Beale, Blue Cross of Idaho, Meridian, Idaho, USA
Jan Witkowski, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, Cold Spring Harbor, New York, USA

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BACKGROUND

Ketamine is purported to be the only truly new and effective therapy discovered for depression in the past 50 years. As Charney, Krystal and colleagues demonstrated two decades ago, people who are severely depressed and often suicidal, respond rapidly to the common anesthetic, reporting dramatic mood changes within minutes. The benefits can last for several weeks, giving other standard therapies the opportunity to take effect.

Despite this, ketamine is not widely available. This is, in part, because the patent for the formulation of ketamine in current use is long expired, reducing the incentive for industry to promote a new indication for depression. In addition, the current method of administration is intravenous; this means that the drug must be administered by specialist personnel in a medical office. And, indeed, a patchwork of individual physicians, clinics specializing in anesthesia for palliative care or neuropathic pain, and a few psychiatry clinics at major institutions, are offering treatment to people with depression.

The complexities in the use of ketamine for treatment of depression are many but perhaps can be encapsulated in the following question: If ketamine is valuable for the treatment of depression, what can, and should, be done to make it more widely available in a safe and effective way?

This Banbury meeting convened representatives from academia, government, private payers, and pharmaceutical companies, as well as patient advocates. The aims of the meeting were to examine the research and policy needed to evaluate the efficacy and safety of ketamine with the goal of facilitating the proper use of ketamine through FDA-approved pathways.

After extensive and lively discussions the participants generally felt that while more data from future clinical trials would be useful, the efficacy of ketamine in helping those with the most severe forms of depression justified exploring what steps can be taken now to provide it safely. The meeting agreed on three steps: (1) procurement of a formal statement from an acknowledged professional organization or organizations, providing a clear and concise overview of the state of the field; (2) formation of a registry of patients receiving ketamine for the treatment of mood disorders; (3) support for continued research.
MEETING SESSIONS

Session 1: Current Knowledge and Ongoing Research
Chairperson: Sanjay Mathew, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas, USA

- Dennis Charney, Icahn School of Medicine, New York, New York, USA and Maurizio Fava, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

  Ketamine in Depression: Clinical Trial Evidence

- Gerard Sanacora, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, USA

  Lessons from other proposed rapidly acting antidepressants - pharmacological specificity and non-specific clinical effects

- Elliot Ehrich, Alkermes, plc, Waltham, Massachusetts, USA

  Opioid Modulation as a Treatment of Major Depressive Disorder

- Charles Nemeroff, University of Miami, Miami, Florida, USA

  Meta-analysis of Ketamine and related compounds in Depression

- Alan Schatzberg, Stanford University, Stanford, California, USA, and Mi Hillefors, National Institute of Mental Health, Bethesda, Maryland, USA

  Where next for research?

Session 2: Current Clinical Practice and Challenges
Chairperson: Rhonda Robinson Beale, Blue Cross of Idaho, Meridian, Idaho, USA

- Albert Dahan, Leiden University Medical Center, Leiden, The Netherlands

  Ketamine pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics: Efficacy and toxicity

- Glen Brooks, New York Ketamine Infusions, New York, New York, USA

  Current Clinical Practice and Challenges

- Steven Levine, Ketamine Treatment Centers, Princeton, New Jersey, USA

  Five years of clinical experience with ketamine treatment for depression in an outpatient/private practice setting

- Mark Frye, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota, USA

  Ketamine Clinics for Treatment Resistant Depression: Infrastructure and Clinical Development

- Mason Turner, Kaiser Permanente, San Francisco, California, USA

  The role of ketamine in long-term treatment of depression: Legal, regulatory and ethical considerations in the use of ketamine

Session 3: Stakeholder concerns
Chairperson: Anil Malhotra, North Shore-LIJ Health System, Glen Oaks, New York, USA

- Maria Isaac, European Medicines Agency, London, United Kingdom

- Dennis Hartman, Ketamine Advocacy Network, Seattle, Washington

- Paul Summergrad, Tufts Medical Center, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

- Rhonda Robinson Beale, Blue Cross of Idaho, Meridian, Idaho, USA

- Ilse Wiechers, Department of Veterans Affairs, West Haven, Connecticut, USA

Session 4: Recommendations and Next Steps
Chairperson: Howard Goldman, University of Maryland, Potomac, Maryland, USA
MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Glen Brooks, New York Ketamine Infusions, LLC, USA
Dennis Charney, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, USA
Albert Dahan, Leiden University Medical Center, Netherlands
Wayne Drevets, Janssen Research & Development, USA
Elliot Ehrich, Alkermes, USA
Maurizio Fava, Massachusetts General Hospital, USA
Mark Frye, Mayo Clinic, USA
Howard Goldman, University of Maryland, USA
Dennis Hartman, Ketamine Advocacy Network, USA
Hakon Heimer, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, USA
Mi Hillefors, National Institute of Mental Health, USA
Maria Isaac, European Medicines Agency, United Kingdom
John Krystal, Yale University, USA
Steven Levine, Ketamine Treatment Centers of Princeton, USA
Anil Malhotra, North Shore-LIJ Health System, USA
Sanjay Mathew, Baylor College of Medicine, USA
Charles Nemeroff, University of Miami, USA
Rhonda Robinson Beale, Blue Cross of Idaho, USA
Gerard Sanacora, Yale University, USA
Alan Schatzberg, Stanford University School of Medicine, USA
Paul Summergrad, Tufts Medical Center, USA
Mason Turner, Kaiser Permanente, USA
James Watson, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, USA
Ilse Wiechers, Department of Veterans Affairs, USA
Jan Witkowski, Banbury Center, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, USA